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ABSTRACT

This study examined acquisition and development of children's social/symbolic and strategic communication abilities within a sociolinguistic model of communicative competence. The major theoretical perspective was derived from Mead's symbolic interactionism and the cognitive-developmental theories of Piaget and Werner. Role-taking was the central concept used to examine the developmental variation and achievement of specific communicative abilities in two communicative task situations: (1) social/strategic or "persuasive," (2) social perspective taking, or "empathy." Measures of role-taking ability were developed, based on qualitative criteria established by the social/symbolic requirements of the communication task. Two additional sub-skill indices of role-taking ability were also developed: a communication construct measure and a communication "management" score. The sample consisted of 61 grade school children, 27 males and 34 females, ages 9-12, from three ethnic groups (Caucasian, Black, and Spanish American), all having a low socio-economic background. Results showed that older children and Caucasian children demonstrated significantly greater role-taking ability, that general role-taking ability operates across task situations and conceptual domains, that grade level was minimally important in communication construct usage, and that the ability to manage the ongoing situation across tasks showed a significant developmental increase. (Author/CLK)

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THE STRATEGIC USE OF LANGUAGE: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC VIEW OF COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT *

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The systematic and scientific study of socialization --the process by which individuals selectively acquire the skills, knowledge, values and dispositions that enable them to participate as more or less effective members of groups and the society[1]--has only recently been approached from the perspective of how current theory and research in the field of socialization or social behavior as a whole might profitably be integrated.[2] The major problem in developing an emergent theory of socialization, as Goslin notes, has been "the difficulty in integrating sociological, anthropological and psychological conceptions of the social-learning process."[3] While the great diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of socialization is extremely broad, a few concrete issues or common themes do emerge that are dealt with by nearly all who contribute to the study of social learning as a distinct field.

One central and important issue which helps to establish the framework for this paper that is widely held and runs explicitly through the writings of most researchers who maintain this socialization perspective, is that a prerequisite for learning a great many social-interaction skills resides in the development of linguistic and cognitive symbolic processes. As Goslin notes:

> At the most elementary level .... verbal skills are a prerequisite for learning most roles. ...[moreover] it is apparent that individuals differ widely with respect to the qualities they bring to situations in which role-learning and/or role-negotiation is necessary. ... Since a great part of role-learning is mediated by symbolic processes of one sort or another, we may expect to find considerable differences between individuals in their ability to learn many roles according to their facility with language and the degree of their conceptual development generally.[4]

Hence, there is widespread agreement that the socialization of the individual from early childhood to adult forms of symbolic interaction is greatly facilitated by, or largely dependent upon, the development, comprehension and use of language. As Smith and Miller note in their introduction to the proceedings of a landmark conference on language development: "Anyone who, in the spirit of this century, tries to cope with the intricacies of human thought finds it necessary first to cope with the intricacies of the symbolic systems through which human thought makes itself manifest."[5] Thus,

language development and symbolic interaction have ranked high in importance as a topic of study and research in Anthropology, linguistics, social psychology, and speech communication.

Linguistic anthropologist Dell Hymes makes the point that the "study of an adequate theory of language in interaction with social setting has enlisted scholars from all the social sciences in a common enterprise ... and the need for such a study is clear because the unity of language and social life is rooted in the integrity of the message as an act."[6] From his research in sociolinguistics, Basil Bernstein maintains that a "public language" facilitates sensitivity to social interaction, because "language is considered one of the most important means of initiating, synthesising, and reinforcing ways of thinking, feeling and behavior which are functionally related to the social group."[7] Similarly, Blumenthal, in reviewing the early research in psycholinguistics, indicates that the acquisition of language was one of the most intensively studied problems in the field.[8] In a recent text on social psychology Roger Brown devotes almost one-seventh of its pages to the topic of language acquisition and the role of language in socail behavior.[9] Finally, within the field of speech communication it has recently been recognized by those who are attempting to develop a theory of human communication that the study of language and speech communication behavior are central concerns in speech communication education. The most notable contributors to this position have been Williams, Wood and Hopper.[10]

The convergence of these many theoretical points of view and contributions to the study of the development of the social use of language comes mainly from two areas: psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. As offshoots from linguistics, anthropology, psychology and sociology, the terms identify, not so much disciplinary affiliation, as problem interests within the larger context of research in human communication. Each term, then, represents a set of interests in language shared by the social sciences as a whole. But just as psychologists don't stuey all of human behavior, psycholinguists and sociolinguists don't study all of communication skill development.

In current usage developmental psycholinguistics is concerned with identifying and studying those psychological processes that contribute to the acquisition, production and comprehension of language. Among the major

categories of the psycholinguist's subject matter are the relationship between language and thought (or cognition), universals in language acquisition, language development in the child (acquisition of earliest sounds and word combinations), first grammars, early grammatical rules and the operation of transformational rules, and comprehension versus production of speech (linguistic competence).[11]

Sociolinguistics can be described as the study of verbal behavior in terms of the social characteristics of speakers, their cultural background, the ecological (situational) properties of the environment in which they interact, and most important, the level of functional communication competence a given speaker possesses.[12] This perspective of the sociolinguistic position comes mainly from the "symbolic interactionist" tradition.[13] This view examines language as a situational production which varies by the definitions given objects, selves, others, time, place and the social relationship between speakers.

Sociolinguist's of the symbolic interactionist tradition who are working within the general framework of socialization theory are dealing with a construct that suggests a rather unique view of social interaction. In its broadest sense "symbolic interaction" refers to the way individuals act toward or communicate with each other as individuals or groups within social contexts.[14] In more specific terms, the social interactionist, in addition to studying how groups, institutions, and abstract social structures give form, direction and meaning to the everyday lives of people, is specifically and uniquely interested in the symbolic and strategic processes and expressions developed and utilized by individuals engaging in social interaction. This construct goes beyond the view of social interaction as a medium through which certain sociological or psychological determinants of behavior move to bring about given forms of human behavior. Social interaction is seen to be of vital importance in its own right; it is a "process that <u>forms</u> human conduct instead of being merely a means or a setting for the expression or release of human conduct."[15]

What makes the interaction "symbolic" is the action associated with the communication exchange. The individuals interacting with one another have to take account of and "manage" what each other is doing or is about to do; they must <u>fit</u> their individual lines of activity in some manner to the actions of

significant others. Engaging in symbolic interaction involves interpretation of the action of others' bodily movements, expressions, tones of voice, requests, commands, non verbal cues, and any number of persuasive strategies or transactions. A key feature of this joint association of symbolic interaction is that the individuals involved must reflectively take each other's roles and "manage" the communication exchange in specific situational contexts. This view of sociolinguistics is largely a revision of the Mead-Cooley-Piaget perspective on the genesis of self in relation to the concept of language in social interaction.[16] Sociolinguistic competence in this context would be equivalent to the child's social "symbolic abilities."

The case for sociolinguistic description and study is best made by Hymes who maintains that:

> ...failure to postulate a model and taxonomy of sociolinguistic systems as a goal will perpetuate a long-standing unsatisfactory state of affairs, namely, the failure of scientific study to address itself to the unity of language and social life. This unity is rooted in the use of language in social life, in the integrity of the message as an act.[17]

Thus, the study of sociolinguistics, rather than starting with descriptions of a single language, and proceeding to look for cognitive and developmental correlates and consequences, starts with the description of a speech community, and of the verbal repertories of individuals who compose it.[18]

While the differences between these two areas of study are not in actuality as sharply delineated as indicated above,[19] there are important differences and points of view with regard to several fundamental processes of communication development within each developmental scheme. The most important issue has to do with the question of communication <u>competence</u>. The commonality here is that while competence is of central concern to both psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic study, the way in which the concept is accounted for and explored is very different.

In the case of developmental psycholinguistics, the concept of language competence has been systematically examined from the standpoint of linguistic capacity (development of grammars, syntax, sentence length, etc.) and the psychological mechanisms that interact with the production of verbalizations (memory, intellect, motivation, etc.). The most widely accepted view of competence held by psycholinguist's is that "the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language --the finite system of rules which enable him to comprehend

and produce an infinite number of novel sentences."[20] This view of linguistic competence (grammatical knowledge) is kept separate from or contrasts with performance (what people can and do comprehend and produce). For the psycholinguist, performance is not competence, but "the expression or realization of competence in behavior."[21] Behavior (performance), then, is one's state of "functional" adequacy.

The sociolinguist takes exception to this narrow view of competence, maintaining that "there are several sectors of communicative competence, of which the grammatical is [only] one."[22] The most persuasive plea for and statement of an expanded description of competence is made by Hymes who maintains that "competence [is] the most general term for the capabilities of a person ...and ...It is dependent upon both (tacit) knowledge and (ability for) use."[23] Given this point of view, we find that competence is not just knowledge of the underlying rules of grammar, but knowledge of the rules of use (performance) in situational or interactional communication situations. Again, according to Hymes: "Development of the child's ability to communicate is influenced as much by his sensitivity to communicative demands of the speech situation as by his increasing linguistic knowledge."[24]

Hence, the acquisition of competence for use can be stated in the same terms as acquisition of competence for grammar:

> Within the developmental matrix in which knowledge of the sentences of a language is acquired, children also acquire knowledge of a set of ways in which sentences are used. From a finite experience of speech acts and their interdependence with sociocultural features, they develop a general theory of the speaking appropriate in their community, which they employ, like other forms of tacit cultural knowledge (competence) in conducting and interpreting social life.[25]

This sociocultural perspective now provides us with a rationale for the importance of studying the unity of language and social life. For not only do children develop the use of phonology, morphology and syntax (as well as extra-linguistic cues) which permit us to identify their linguistic competence at a very early age, but they also learn at a very early age when to speak, when to be quiet, when to use ritual language, when to use polite forms and when to shift language to a multilingual community or to some form of social dialect (appropriateness). In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts or strategies, to take part in interactional speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others.

STUDYING THE STRATEGIC USE OF LANGUAGE

The question to be raised now, is, how does one study the development of functional and strategic aspects of communication ? We have set out a rationale for the importance of such a study, and suggested the need in terms of an expanded view of language competence, but we have yet to establish a specific conceptual framework that will aid us in detailing the underlying capacities or processes when language (speech) is used in "strategic" interaction situations.

Although a few studies exist which attempt to explore various elements of the development of this social-cognitive activity, these studies and approaches have not, in the main, been tied to any unified framework or descriptive typology which attempts to describe or explain the interaction of such variables as communication "routines," situation or setting, or communicative strategy.[26] We are still very much in the territory-mapping stages when it comes to studying the use of language in interaction with social setting.

One very useful structural framework or methodological system for studying the development of this social-cognitive activity, however, comes from the sociological symbolic-interactionist perspective and is called "Role-Taking." The concept stems from the formulation that sees socialization in role-development or role negotiation terms. Here socialization is a two-way process where both socializer and socializee are changed in significant ways as a result of this contractual characteristic of social interaction. The social role behavior expected of an individual in a given interaction is derived from and influenced by one's perceptions, expectations and skills in taking into account the behavior and actions of significant others in specific situational contexts.

While the conceptualization of role-taking and communication behavior and development has a number of theoretical contributors (Mead, Cooley, Piaget, Vygotsky, Goffman, Flavell, etc.),[27] the most significant statement of this concept comes from the social psychology of George Herbert Mead.[28] According to Mead, man's symbolic communication involves "role-taking" or "taking the role of the other." In simple terms this can be described as the process whereby an individual imaginatively constructs the perspectives, values, attitudes of the other, and thus anticipates the behavior of the

other.[29] The learned symbols which require role-taking for their communication Mead called "significant symbols."[30] The basic operation here is a two-person communicative interaction in which person A makes a gesture which B perceives, and responds to (the term "gesture" is used in the broadest possible sense to include any observable behavior on A's part, but with special reference to verbal communication.). As Mead describes it:

> The gesture is that phase of the individual act to which adjustment takes place on the part of other individuals in the social process of behavior. The vocal gesture becomes a significant symbol ... when it has the same effect on the individual making it that it has on the individual to whom it is addressed or who explicitly responds to it, and thus involves a reference to the self of the individual making it.[31]

Since role-taking is involved in virtually all communication interaction by means of significant symbols, this suggests that the individual communicator is able to not only imagine and anticipate ("plan for") how the recipient of his communication understands and/or will respond to that communication (taking the role of a "single" other), but the individual can adopt the attitudes of what Mead calls a "generalized other" as well (a team, group, or whole society).[32] What children seem to be developing here is a cognitive-social perception of how significant "others" might think or behave in a given communication situation in general, as well as inferring how significant "others" would respond or behave in specific strategic interaction communication situations based on whatever specific information the child can extract and "manage" from the immediate situation. This is very similar to Werner's orthogenetic principle which states: "Whenever development occurs, it proceeds from a state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to a state of increasing differentiation, articulation, and hierarchic integration."[33]

Finally, the crucial and central importance of language (verbal communication) in this role-taking process should be underscored. It is through language (significant symbols) that the child acquires the meanings and definitions of those around him. By learning the symbols of his groups, he comes to internalize their definitions of events or things, including their definitions of his own conduct. As Doby notes:

> Language not only enables man to externalize and objectify his thoughts, it also permits him to reflect back upon thought, to evolve and modify his thought and hence develop a sense of self-awareness or self-behavior. Since speech is learned from others, it is social in origin and in time comes to have self-directive properties.[34]

Thus, it seems clear from the above that Mead identifies language as the central mechanism or origin of the individual's role-taking capacity.

The relevance of Mead's theory to the present study is obvious. First, within his notion of the significant symbol, he provides a useful definition of intentional, deliberate communication, as distinguished from the numerous exchanges often loosely called "communicative." With Mead's perspective it should be possible to look at a much larger domain of communication competence. Secondly, it is relevant because of the central place given to communication processes in human development, and to the importance of role-taking in communication processes.

ROLE-TAKING AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION: TWO DESCRIPTIVE FIELD STUDY REPORTS

The concept of role-taking and its relationship to communication behavior is being viewed here as a developmental process. This position rests on the assumption that while adults spend a considerable amount of time with varying degrees of success trying to make accurate guesses about the abilities, knowledge, attitudes, motives, etc. of others with respect to specific communication situations (role-taking behavior), the child's ability to engage in this sort of strategic social-cognitive enterprise is clearly just evolving. Hence the central focus of the following field studies was to examine on a descriptive level the acquisition and activity of the child's communicative behavior as he seeks to predict what the perspective of another individual might be and adapt his communication "strategy" and information to the needs of the listener. In short, what communication behaviors are directly related to role-taking behavior.

The most extensive research work on the development of role-taking skills to date has been conducted by Flavell and his associates.[35] Flavell's series of pilot field studies have established the groundwork for research on the developmental acquisition and stages of role-taking behavior.

The results of Flavell's descriptive research clearly indicates that role-taking activity is very much age dependent, especially in terms of the stages of development a child goes through (Flavell describes this process in terms of what the child needs to know, or know how to do, in order to achieve any role-taking-mediated end).[36] The child needs to know, for example, that there is such a thing as "perspective" (existence), and that others see

things differently; that an analysis of the others' perspective is called for (need); that an analysis needs to be carried out in a particular way (prediction); that this newly arrived at perspective and analysis of the relevant "other" role attributes must be maintained separately from one's own perspective (maintenance); and finally, that these thoughts and newly "managed" perspectives can be applied or translated into specific communicative acts (application).

As might be expected, most younger children manage most of these stages quite badly, although they do have some understanding of perspective by the time they enter school. With respect to older children, the data from a variety of studies suggests that knowledge of "person perception" develops on a number of fronts during middle childhood.[37]

STUDY #1.

Turning specifically to studies relating role-taking (RT) to "strategic" interaction communication, we find one by Flavell which deals with children's ability to persuade others.[38] In Flavell's study, children in grades 3, 7, and 11 were asked either to sell something (a tie), or convince one of their parents (using a photograph) that they should have a television set in their own room. The children were asked to use every argument they could think of which might convince the significant other to buy the object for them. The results were tabulated in terms of the number of different arguments, type of arguments, and an overall general "persuasiveness" score.

Significant differences between the three age groups were found, indicating that older children produce more total arguments and a greater variety of arguments. Older children were also judged to have produced more "persuasive" messages.

Flavell notes in the discussion section of his study that the development of a persuasive repertoire is a very significant expression of the growth of role-taking skills, and perhaps "makes up a substantial minority of the average child's daily verbalizations. ... [furthermore] the child's ability to persuade others appears to lie at the crossroads of numerous other developing behaviors. ... such as his social perception of human motivation."[39] Flavell concludes his discussion with a number of recommendations for future investigation which are now the focus of the next study.

STUDY #2.

The purpose of this second pilot study was to expand upon Flavell's investigations and incorporate some of his suggestions for uncovering developmental trends. Encouraging subjects simply to produce all the persuasive arguments they could think of, and stressing only sheer quantity as it did, Flavell's study provides little direct information about the Child's evaluation of the relative efficacy of different types of appeals, or of different temporal or structural organizations of a given set of appeals, etc. It might be possible, for example, to obtain this kind of information by presenting already constructed persuasive messages and have the child make choices: present two arguments and ask him which he could judge to be more effective in a given situation, and tell why. Methods of this sort might demonstrate interesting age changes in the preference hierarchy: younger children prefer argument-type X above all others; older children opt for Y, judging X to be either ineffective or would increase sales resistance; still older children might detect subtle flaws in Y and find reasons for preferring still another argument, given a particular persuasee, and context.

A second series of tasks could also be developed in an attempt to find out what cognitive social (RT) capacities correlate with communication behaviors. In short, is the capacity for role-taking in a given communication behavior context similar to the capacity needed to attribute motivations to significant others ?

METHOD

Subjects. Sixty (N=60) subjects were used in this study from grades 4 (N=18), 5 (N=21) and 6 (N=21) with an age range of 9 to 12 years. Children were selected from three ethnic groups: Anglo (N=19), Black (N=14) and Spanish Speaking (N=27); Two schools (School I and School II, a Title I School); and one socio-economic group (lower).

Procedures. All subjects were visited once (approximately twenty-five minutes per child) by a field researcher (a female undergraduate in either the Child Development or Speech Communication curriculum). Two short Role-Taking Tasks (RTT-I & II) were administered to each child individually with all sessions tape recorded. Each interviewer administered the RTT's in the same order to an equal number of different ethnic groups.

Techniques. Each subject was administered two RTT's designed to examine the child's ability to take anothers perspective. The first task (RTT-I) is a direct assessment of RT capacities in terms of the development of communication behaviors; The second task (RTT-II) an indirect assessment of conceptual capacities for RT behavior.

RTT-I: The first task was designed to explore the development of social and "strategic" communication behavior as it relates to RT skills. The procedure involved two distinct but related parts:

A. Part one involved a simple open-ended question and answer session between S and interviewer. The child's task was to examine a series of large colored and highly attractive photographs (pictures of toys, sports equipment, bikes, "Hot Wheels" etc.) and indicate how he/she might go about getting them from their mother or father. They were asked to "say everything they could think of, use any argument to convince their _____they should have the (object)."

B. Part two in this communication strategy task asked the child to examine a series of previously prepared (written out on large cards) persuasive strategies or "sales pitches," and select out from this group of strategies which one he/she thought would work best on his/her parents and tell why.

This task, which was treated in more and more complex ways, was analyzed and scored for differences on egocentricism-social dimension, levels of abstraction, level of RT strategy, and a "management" score. The expectations were as follows: That older children would develop a larger number, variety and ratio of appeals; that the strategies used would be more abstract; that evidence of RT skill would be greater; and that they would "manage" the information to a greater degree than younger children.

RTT-II: The second task was a social perception test designed to examine how children understand and take on the social perspective (thoughts and feelings) of significant others. This task has several steps:

A. I to S: "What I would like you to do now is to think of a situation when someone you like (maybe your best friend) hurt or disappointed you, or did something to you or did something to something that was yours. Can you think about such a situation ? (maybe I had to help the child establish the name of a friend). Take a minute to think about it and tell me about it."

B. S describes the situation.

C. I to S:"Now I want you to do is to try and remember what you were thinking and feeling during this situation. Tell me what you were thinking and feeling during this situation (I probes).

D. S describes what he/she was thinking and feeling.

E. I to S: "Now I would like you to do something that is much more difficult (harder)..ok? I want you to try real hard for a minute to put yourself in the other person's (your friends) shoes. How did he/she feel, what was he/she thinking and feeling during this situation ? Try to take on the other persons viewpoint (thoughts).

F. S thinks a bit and reports on the situation from others' view.

This social perspective task was analyzed in terms of how the child systematically takes on anothers perspective (thoughts and feelings). The expectation is that children up to age 10-11 (grade 6) will be totally egocentric on this task as taking anothers perspective requires an ability to thoroughly differentiate between self and another and to attribute motivations to the other. Older children should also demonstrate a higher level of abstraction, "management" and RT skill.

RESULTS:

An analysis of the results is divided into three parts. First we have the results of RTT-Ia,b, in terms of the expectations set out above; second the results from RTT-II are reported; and finally, selected variables from the results of RTT-I and RTT-II are correlated (Summary table of RTT-I & II average Mean scores appears on page 13).

RTT-I:

1. Number, Type and Ratio of Appeals
   As expected, older children (6th grade) in the open-ended task situation (RTT-Ia) not only used a greater number of appeals on the average (5.47 compared to 3.50 for 4th grade and 3.89 for 5th grade for School I), but a greater variety and higher ratio of different appeals (the number of different appeals divided by the number of total appeals), with the averages or differences between 4th and 5th grade less marked (.626 and .652 versus .647) than between the 4th and 6th grades.

   An F test for significance was conducted on the number of appeals, number of different appeals, and the ratio of different appeals to number of appeals across all three grades, ethnic groups and for both schools. Analysis of variance revealed significant effects for number of appeals versus grade level overall ($F=3.81$, $p<.05$), with a follow-up test for significance among the various means done with Dunn's Multiple Comparison Test indicating that the main significant difference was between grade 4 and 6 ($p<.05$); and for number of different appeals versus grade overall ($F=5.44$, $p<.01$), with Dunn's Multiple Comparison Test showing the main difference again between grade 4 and 6 ($p<.05$).

2. Levels of Abstraction (Range of scores: 1-5)
   The degree to which the child was able to develop an overall communication strategy that focused on the specific object and/or its attributes, or on constructs that were adapted specifically for specific target receivers (as opposed to very global or random strategies and target statements) resulted in an abstraction level score.

   The results indicate that older children seem to "abstract" more from either their own experience (RTT-Ia) when developing an open-ended communication strategy, or when selecting from already prepared strategies (RTT-Ib). Again, the differences are more noticeable between the 4th and 6th grades (not tested for statistical significance).

3. "Management" Score (Range of scores: 1-5)
Closely related to the level of abstraction is the "management" score. If role-taking is an inferential process in part, and children "manage" information not only on the basis of what they know in general, but from what they can extract from the situation, then one would expect that for RTT-Ia and RTT-Ib ("prepared" strategies), older children would have a higher score.

The results indicate that while older children had higher averages on the "management" score, there were no significant differences across grades or schools.[41]

There were significant differences, however, across ethnic groups when scores from both schools were combined. A Kruskal-Wallis Non-Parametric analysis of variance revealed significant differences in terms of "management" scores between the three ethnic groups on the first RTT-Ia ($H=6.716$, $p<.05$).[42] The "management" score on RTT-Ib approached significance ($H=5.10$, with 5.99 required for p .05).

4. Egocentrism Score (Range of scores: 1-5)
Another global measurement found to be grade dependent. The average score decreases with age in this case, indicating that older children are less egocentric in their choices of a persuasive strategy (not tested for statistical significance).

5. Role-Taking Level
Two separate scores were derived for this key variable. First a global evaluation of the child's RT skill was determined for both levels of the first task (RTT-Ia,b).

Comparing the level of RT skill during the open-ended portion of the test (RT-Ia) with the "prepared" strategies part (RTT-Ib), we find an increase in scores (Range: 1-5) not only across grade levels, but across task situations as well. A Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric analysis of variance revealed significant differences on RTT-Ia for 4th versus 5th versus 6th grades when combined for both schools ($H=8.114$, $p<.05$). Significant differences across schools or grades for RTT-Ib did not materialize.

Differences between ethnic groups with scores for both schools combined were also significant on RTT-Ia ($H=8.294$, $p<.05$), and approached significance ($H=5.381$, with 5.99 required for p .05) on RTT-Ib.

An additional numerical score for RTT-Ib was derived which turned out to be more valuable in terms of interpreting the extent to which children were able to role-take when they were asked to make choices among prepared sales pitches for two items and tell why it would work best (RTT-Ib score here= OBJ1 + OBJ2). A low score (1) would indicate almost no instance of RT skill, that is, the child was not able to select an appropriate strategy or tell why it would work for a specific target. A score of (2) would indicate that at least one appropriate strategy and reason were

5. Role-Taking Level Cont'd
matched for a specific target; for a score of (3) at least half the total number possible were matched; and for a score of (5) the child would have to demonstrate fairly complete knowledge of the appropriate relationship between strategy and target and give several reasons.

The averaged numerical scores indicate only a slight trend in the right direction, with children at grade level six selecting and matching strategies for appropriate target "receivers" with a moderate level of success (almost half the total number of possibilities). An analysis of variance reveals that for only School I was there a significant difference between grades on RTT-Ib when scores for 08J1 + 00J2 were combined ($H=8.099$, $p<.05$). When the scores for both schools were combined for grades 4th versus 5th versus 6th, a level of significance for RTT-Ib was almost reached ($H=5.741$, with 5.99 required for p .05). Scores on RTT-Ib for School II across grades and for the three ethnic groups across schools did not reach significance.

RTT-II:

The second role-taking task which examined how children understand and take on the social perspective (perceptions of thoughts and feelings) of significant others, was also evaluated in terms of two global scores and one numerically based score.

1. Level of Abstraction (Range: 1-5)
The degree to which the child was able to focus on a variety of features concerning the situation he/she described, the amount of detail, etc. provided a measurement of level of abstraction. Younger children (4th and 5th grades) generally reported the incident in global and unimaginative terms, with little detail and often without regard to the interviewer's understanding of the narrative. Older children generally provided a more detailed incident and talked about it from more than one perspective (not tested for statistical significance).

2. "Management" Score (Range: 1-5)
This score was again a global impression of the child's ability to manage information based on a real past experience and whatever else he/she could extrapolate from the situation. Again, older children demonstrated an ability to expand earlier statements, ask more questions and generally play the "wait-and-see" game a bit more with the interviewer (not tested for statistical significance).

3. Role-Taking Score (Range:1-5)
A numerical score was also derived for this social perception task. A score of (1) would indicate little or no evidence of RT behavior, with the situation being described essentially from his/her own viewpoint. A score of (5) would indicate a clear demonstration of the ability to suspend one's own judgment, attitudes and feelings

and see the situation from the others' perspective. Again, we find a weak trend in terms of age, but in only one condition (School I across grades) did the RTT-II scores approach significance ($H=5.67$, with 5.99 required for $p < .05$). The other comparisons between schools, grades and ethnic groups were not significant.

RTT-I and RTT-II Correlated

The question was also raised in this descriptive exploratory study concerning the relationship between the cognitive capacities for RT skill and actual communicative behavior. In short, would the child with a high degree of RT skill on the communication task (behavioral responses to persuasive strategies) also demonstrate a high degree of conceptual RT skill on the social perception task? Two tests of correlation were developed.

1. A Spearman Rank Correlation coefficient was run on the overall scores derived from the levels of RT skill for prepared strategies (RTT-Ib) versus the RT score from the social perception task (RTT-II). A correlation coefficient of $\rho = .486$ was achieved, indicating a moderately positive association.[43]

2. Individual Kendall tau correlation coefficients were run to determine the correlation between RTT-Ib and RTT-II for each school grade and ethnic group.[44] The overall level of significance for School I versus School II was $\tau = 0.36$, indicating a moderately positive correlation ($p < .05$). Comparisons for grade versus grade across schools reveals a significance range of $\tau = 0.30$ to 0.40 indicating a moderately positiv correlation between grades. The correlation coefficients for each ethnic group were: $\tau = 0.56$ for group 1 (Anglo), indicating a substantial positive correlation; $\tau = 0.24$ for ethnic group 2 (Black), indicating a low positive association; and $\tau = 0.21$ for ethnic group 3 (Spanish speaking), indicating a low positive correlation.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

Viewing the development of the strategic use of language as a process mediated by role-taking operations, provides us not only with information related to the development of thought processes during early childhood, but with several implications for educational practice. This is a very logical concluding thought since the functions of language in the classrrom are a special case of the general problem of the study of language in its socio-cultural context.

The overall and most important observation to be made regarding this study is that the data clearly indicate that only a limited number of developmental operations related to the social/cognitive process of role-taking are in progress during early childhood.

Support for the idea that these various skills in role-taking activity are just beginning to emerge can be found in the analysis of RTT-Ia compared with RTT-Ib. It was anticipated that if older children were able to perceive and maintain a significant others' perspective in an open-ended strategic interpersonal situation where only a minimum amount of information was provided for the child to "manage" (RTT-Ia), then they would certainly be able to make strategic interpersonal inferences when presented with specific information which they could "manage" (RTT-Ib, prepared strategies). An analysis of the data from RTT-Ia reveals that older children were indeed capable of demonstrating greater skill in role-taking behavior in terms of extracting from their general knowledge enough information in order to make predictions about what (global) appeals might work on significant others. However, when S's were asked to "manage" and make use of strategies prepared for specific target receivers, and tell how they were different or why they wouldn't work, this new perceptual and cognitive demand was difficult to interpret and apply. Situations calling for the "management," interpretation, categorization and adaptation of specific persuasive strategies seems to require the ability to make higher level inferential judgments and predictions concerning the role attributes of significant others in particular situations. In only one instance did the level of RT skill for older children on RTT-Ib reach significance (for School I on OBJ1 + OBJ2).

An analysis of the communication strategies developed by children across ages in terms of the number, type and variety of appeals suggests that little differentiation was made even by 6th graders between the type of appeal and

choice of target. While the number of appeals and number of different appeals developed in an open-ended communication exchange was significantly greater for older children, the appeals were not generally more sophisticated or adapted for specific receivers. Older children seemed to have a greater store of appeals available and used more of them, but with little attention to complexity or specialized adaptation to specific receivers ("shot-gun" approach).

Information from RTT-II indicates that when children are asked to shift to a more conceptual role-taking process (understanding and taking on the thoughts and feelings of significant others), children (age 9-12) generally have not yet developed the ability to shift perspectives, suspend their own judgment, attitudes and feelings and see the situation from the others' perspective (RTT-II scores for S's in grade 6, School I did approach significance).

The question regarding the relationship between the social/cognitive use of RT strategies (RTT-Iab) and the skills involved in the cognitive capacities for RTT-II, is somewhat difficult to interpret in light of the lack of significance across most other variables. The most striking result is that a substantial positive correlation (τ=0.56) exists between scores for RTT-I and RTT-II for only ethnic group 1 (Anglo). One possible tentative conclusion which might be drawn here is that although all of the S's tested were from the same socio-economic group, white lower-class children performed considerably better on RTT tasks which involved both the development of social communication "strategies" (RT behavior) as well as conceptual tasks involving the adoption of the attitudes and feelings of others.

One of the most significant aspects in the study of the development of language from a sociolinguistic perspective is that our notions of communication competence expand enormously when we examine carefully the child's symbolic and strategic use of speech. The question of how and where these various role-taking activities might figure in the larger context of the child's everyday social development, can be seen in the fact that the acquisition of a given inferential activity would make possible forms of social behavior and interaction not previously attainable. A child's symbolic and pragmatic communication competence is based on how he/she perceives, categorizes and manages the linguistic and social situations of his/her world and differentiates his/her ways of speaking accordingly. What recent research and thought clearly indicates, is that we need to expand our notions of competence and consider how children use their language in specific communication situations.

Educational practice could be much more supportive of this aspect of development if less emphasis were placed upon requiring children to learn about and speak according to specific grammatical forms, and more emphasis were placed upon helping children to also use their language to perform certain functions (such as defining or changing perspectives, referring, abstracting from a set of facts, asking questions, etc.). There is growing evidence that when children do learn new grammatical forms they do so because they have become aware of new "meanings" (new functions which language can perform) for which they must find means of expression.[45] In any case, turning our teaching strategies around and looking at how children in fact use their language to communicate provides us with a much larger view of their linguistic, cognitive and social competence.

Finally, when children are given the opportunity to explore how language works as a force for solving problems, for working through interpersonal exchanges, for seeing different points of view, and a whole host of very specialized communication tasks (naming, describing, persuading, for poetic purposes, etc.), we have helped to expand the child's world view and hopefully helped him to move from a limited and powerless position of knowledge and insight of self and others to one of power and potential for "coping with his world in a more efficient manner, ...changing what he finds unsatisfactory to him, and maintaining what he finds good."[46]

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